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SUBJECT: Ecuador agrees to support U.S. CITES shark proposal and additional conservation efforts

REF: STATE 6668

11. (Summary) Ecuador's head delegate to the March CITES COP-15 in Doha, Qatar, told the Embassy January 29 that the GoE will support both U.S. CITES proposals on sharks and sent a letter confirming Ecuador's support. In discussions January 27 the Vice-Minister of the Environment told emboffs that Ecuador had officially received only the CITES shark proposals and thus could not yet give a comment on Ecuador's probable stance on other U.S. CITES proposals, although he was supportive in principle. Discussions with representatives of Ecuador's fisheries authority and commercial fishing sector on January 25-26 helped convince the GoE to support the U.S. shark proposals. The Ecuadorean delegation is headed by Mr. Manfred Altamirano. A tentative date in early April, for a workshop on shark identification organized by OES/OMC, the Embassy, and the GoE, and funded by NOAA and Ecuador's Subsecretary for Fishing Resources, was agreed upon. (End Summary).

Ecuador Supports U.S. Shark Proposals for Upcoming COP-15 in Qatar

12. ESTHoff and Visiting OES/OMC Science Fellow met January 26 with Ecuador's Vice-Minister of the Environment, Guido Mosquera Martinez, and the head of Ecuador's delegation at the upcoming CITES COP-15, Manfred Altamirano, Subsecretary of Marine Coastal Management in the Ministry of the Environment, to discuss Ecuador's position towards the U.S. proposals (reftel). VM Mosquera told us that Ecuador was inclined to support the U.S. shark proposals and was awaiting input from Ecuadorian fisheries authorities. He had not yet received the official text of the other CITES proposals and thus was unable to offer a substantive reply, although he did not sound negative on any particular issue. On January 29, following an interagency meeting, the GoE confirmed that it would support the U.S. shark proposals and sent an official letter confirming its support.

13. On January 25-26 visiting OES/OMC Science Fellow Todd Capson met with officials from Ecuador's Subsecretary of Fishing Resources (SRP): Guillermo Moran (Director) and biologist Jimmy Martinez, as well as representatives from the commercial fisheries sector, Luigi Benincasa (Director of the Association of Tuna Fishermen of Ecuador) and Juan Benincasa (Manager of Mardex, S.A.) to determine their position on and request their support for the U.S. shark proposals. The discussion addressed the impact of the proposals on Ecuador's shark fisheries, compliance issues associated with an Appendix II listing of the species in question (see Article IV, Regulation of Trade in Specimens Included in Appendix II) and USG-sponsored efforts to promote capacity building and regional cooperation for shark conservation and management in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO). The fact that the scalloped hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) is no longer caught in commercially significant numbers in Ecuadorian coastal shark fisheries

strengthened arguments for its addition to CITES Appendix II. (Within the EPO, sightings of *S. lewini* have decreased by 71% over the period 1992–2004). Of the species proposed for listing, only the smooth hammerhead (*S. zygaena*) is commercially significant in Ecuador.

#### Ecuador Co-sponsoring Upcoming Shark Conservation Efforts

14. Capacity building efforts for shark conservation and management in the EPO will include a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and SRP-sponsored workshop on shark species identification, tentatively scheduled for April 2010 in Manta, Ecuador, and involve scientists from EPO countries, NOAA, and the SRP. The workshop will employ the recently published Field Guide to the Identification of the Principal Sharks of the Eastern Pacific Ocean (Regional Guide), an outcome of two previous workshops on Regional Shark Conservation and Management in the EPO (July and December of 2008, respectively), all of which were supported with funds from the Fisheries Working Group of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. The Regional Guide, designed to facilitate the collection of species-specific data on shark fisheries in the EPO, was highly useful during discussions with Ecuadorian officials on the U.S. CITES shark proposals.

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15. The Ecuadorean delegation to the COP-15 in Qatar is headed by Manfred Altimirano, Subsecretary of Marine Coastal Management in the Ministry of the Environment, and will include Jimmy Martinez (whose travel support to the COP-15 was arranged in collaboration with Conservation International, Wild Aid, and the Pew Foundation), and two technical representatives.  
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